

Your Friday Feature

Art in the City / Week 13



The Flock of Finns Returns!

Image Credit: Designed and printed by the Steam Exchange.

The Flock of Finns, a colorful installation of 28 large-scale bird sculptures based on the work of Louisville artist Marvin Finn (1917-2007), will be welcomed back to Louisville on Thursday, May 14 at 10:30 am in Waterfront Park on the corner of Preston and Witherspoon. The Steam Exchange, a community arts organization based in the Smoketown neighborhood, will have their

portable print station on site so that anyone attending the event can create their own print commemorating the return of the Finns. Please join us to celebrate the return of the Flock!

The Flock of Finns left Louisville in May of 2014 to be conserved at the McKay Lodge Conservation Laboratory in Oberlin, Ohio. Rust blisters caused by every day wear and tear had begun to appear on the sculptures indicating that irreparable corrosion under the paint layer had set in. In addition, the previous paint layer had begun to fade due to exposure to the elements. In order to prevent further damage to the sculptures and to restore their original colorful appearance, the decision was made by Metro, in collaboration with the Commission on Public Art (COPA), to have them professionally conserved.

While in Ohio, the Flock was sandblasted down to their original steel surfaces, then reprimed and repainted using a more durable, resistant paint called PPG Ameron PSX-700 Engineered Siloxane, the same paint used by Disney World for rides and fixtures as well by the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy for hard wearing and wet ship topsides. The resulting paint surface should last for many years and is easily maintained. Using digital photographs and color matching, the conservators painstakingly researched and replicated the original paint surface to ensure that the intended appearance of the Flock was precisely preserved.

The Flock of Finns conservation was a joint project by Louisville Metro Public Art Initiative and Commission on Public Art and Waterfront Development Corporation.

The Flock of Finns project was developed by the Mayor's Advisory Committee in February 2000. All of the sculptures in the installation were based on smaller wooden originals created by Louisville artist Marvin Finn. The original designs were enlarged and fabricated in steel, then painted in Finn's style by artist Mellissa Wilson. When it first took flight, the Flock of Finns traveled around Louisville and was installed in several different sites until it reached its final roosting place in Waterfront Park.

Marvin Finn was the son of an Alabama sharecropper who learned to whittle from his father. One of twelve children, Finn used his imagination and the materials around him as a child to create the toys his family could not afford to give him. Finn continued making fanciful creations as an adult, eventually garnering the attention of art collectors with his bold colors and imaginative creatures.

[Kristin Gilbert]